Threats of ecological disaster to India

2500. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK; Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in 'the Times of India' of 25th August, 1985 under the heading 'India faces ecological disaster'; and

(b) if so, what remedial measures Government have taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI) : (a) Yes Sir. The news item has referred to the recently published report brought out by the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, a Non-Governmental Organisation.

(b) Several measures have been taken by the Government for protection of environment since the First Five Year Plan. Some of the important schemes for soil conservation and land improvement are the following:—

—Centrally sponsored scheme for soil conservation in catchments of river valley projects ;

—Centrally sponsored scheme on integrated watershed management in the catchment of flood prone rivers ;

—Pilot programme for reclamation of ravines and gullies;

—treatment of saline and alkaline soils;

—Command area development.

Over the years, afforestation programmes have also been stepped up with special emphasis on social forestry. The National Wastelands Development Board has been set up with the object of raising fuel and fodder plantations on 5 million hectares every year.

Other major steps to improve the state of environemet in the country include enforcement of legislative and administrative measures for pollution control, the Ganga Action Plan, environmental appraisal of development projects, campaign for creating environmental awareness, setting up of State Pollution Control Boards and Departments of Environment, integrated eco-development programmes for conservation of selected ecosystems, and setting up of National Parks and sanctuaries.

Indo-Pak talks for trade relations

2501. SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) what has been the concrete outcome of talks between the Finance Ministers of India and Pakistan held in New Delhi from November, 14 to 16 on expansion of trade and economic relations between the two countries:

(b) what type of joint ventures are proposed to be started in the industrial field in the two countries and what steps are proposed to be taken to expand trade in public sector between the two countries ;

(c) whether Government propose to introduce direct dialling facilites between the two countries and float a new airline to knit all important centres of the region (S.A.R.C.); and

(d) what steps are being taken to translate into ation various proposals discussed between the two Ministers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K.R. NARAYANAN): (a) It was agreed